

**PRESS STATEMENT FROM MARY BETH LEONARD, U.S. DEPARTMENT  
OF STATE WEST AFRICAN BUREAU OFFICE DIRECTOR**

**US EMBASSY DAKAR SENEGAL**

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The Government of the United States of America congratulates the government and people of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau for the free and fair presidential elections that resulted in the election of Mr. Malam Bacai Sanhá. The Government of the United States further congratulates the government and people of Guinea-Bissau for a successful transition to the new Sanhá Presidency. We are particularly pleased that President Sanhá and former President Koumba Yala have indicated a mutual willingness to work together in this troubled period in the country's history. We also congratulate interim-President Pereira for his skillful handling of a difficult transition period over the last six months.

The U.S. Government believes, however, that now the time has come for Bissau-Guineans to set aside their differences and to come together to build a prosperous nation. The foundation for this future lies in the realms of justice for those who have committed high crimes; the prevalence of civilians in the political life of the Republic; and an open, transparent, dynamic and legal economy.

First, we call for an end to the official tolerance of the murder of public figures, most lately, President Vieira, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Batiste Tagme Na Waie, Helder Proença, and Baçiro Dabó. This cycle of violence must end. A full investigation of these deeds, or a successful truth and reconciliation process; what ever the method of redress, breaking the cycle of impunity and rebuilding confidence in the rule of law is essential.

Second, global history shows that stable governments are run by civilians and supported by the armed forces, not the other way around. It is in the interest of the armed forces to restrict themselves to the vitally important duty of

defending the territory, and to guarantee as necessary the security of civilians and civil institutions.

Third, security sector reform is essential to create an appropriate relationship between the civilian and military sectors. Security sector reform means reducing the size of the armed forces, and the armed forces ceding power to civilian institutions. We also understand that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the armed forces into the mainstream of Bissau-Guinean life cannot be sustained without the creation of economic opportunities that demobilized soldiers can take advantage of.

Fourth, the scourge of cocaine trafficking through the national territory's waters and airports is a corrupting influence that stunts economic growth, impedes political progress and undermines national sovereignty. Vigorous enforcement of the laws and the imprisonment of persons associated with the transit of cocaine are essential to building effective institutions based on respect for laws and the maintenance of civic virtue that is essential for Guinea-Bissau to move itself away from poverty, disease and isolation.

Finally, we call on Bissau-Guineans to respect the basic tenets of governance, civil liberties, and fundamental freedoms that that President Obama in Ghana cited as the foundations of "capable, reliable, and transparent institutions that are the key to success...that give life to democracy, because that is what matters most in most people's everyday lives."

The United States recognizes the rich soil, resourcefulness, and ingenuity of the Bissau-Guinean people that are available to be harnessed to create sustainable economic development that will provide opportunities to improve the lives of all Bissau-Guineans.

In the short time that I have been here to attend the inauguration of President Sanhá, the courtesy and sincerity of Bissau-Guineans, coupled with their desire to improve their lives and reform their institutions have impressed me considerably. On behalf of the US Government and the American people and the American people, I heartily congratulate the people of Guinea-Bissau on your

commitment to peace and democracy as evidenced by the process that culminated in yesterday's inauguration of President Sahná. I urge political leaders to build a future for Guinea-Bissau worthy of their people's aspirations.